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ABSTRACT

In 1985 the Center for Educational Development (CED) and the Urban League began an initiative to improve the public schools in Rochester, New York. This was in response to growing concern and supporting evidence about young people dropping out of school and/or receiving an inadequate education. Task forces were convened to study the issues behind these educational problems and to make recommendations to various interest groups. This report presents the recommendations and suggests strategies for their implementation. It was recommended that the school district work toward: (1) greater parent participation; (2) greater teacher professionalism; (3) greater pupil participation; (4) greater cultural understanding; (5) greater academic rigor; (6) a better teaching and learning environment; (7) better services to students; (8) better transportation services; (9) more school district participation in the community. Other suggestions addressed to parents and students encouraged more appreciation and support of the school system. Teachers were in turn asked to become more effective in their relationships with parents and students. Other suggestions were directed to these groups outside of the school system: (1) the business community; (2) community groups; (3) human service agencies; (4) cultural organizations; (5) religious institutions; (6) institutions of higher learning; (7) libraries; (8) departments of recreation; and (9) the media. (VM)

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A CALL TO ACTION

A REPORT FROM

THE CED/URBAN LEAGUE
COMMUNITY TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION

MARCH 6, 1986

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CALL TO ACTION

The future of Rochester and Monroe County depends on an enlightened citizenry, participating fully in the working life and the public life of our community. The times will demand more of us than ever before -- in education, in self-discipline and in technical competency.

But there is a crisis in our community. We are failing our young people, failing to adequately prepare them to assume their roles, failing to prepare them to cope in the society we have created.

Students are graduating from city high schools with little or no job skills or further education goals. Some graduate practically illiterate. Many more never graduate at all. There are great costs to this, and greater costs to come if nothing is done to change the situation. There will be increased expenses for public assistance, for crime prevention, for drug rehabilitation, for jails and prisons.

But the costs in human life and human dignity will be even greater, as more and more of our young people will be consigned to an unproductive and unfulfilling existence. As a nation, we recently mourned the loss of seven astronauts. So should we mourn the loss of so many lives being wasted in our own community every day.

Be assured: the problem belongs to all of us -- not just to the Board of Education -- not just to the school administrators, principals, and teachers, -- not just to parents. The problem belongs to all of us: businesses, unions, social service agencies, churches and synagogues, governments at all levels, cultural institutions, our colleges and universities, and the students themselves. All of us share responsibility for the problem, and all of us can contribute to finding solutions.

What is required is a radical adjustment to traditional ways of thinking about the responsibility for education. We need to come together and address the problem. We need to bring energy, determination, and boldness with us. We must act out of a sense of compassion, yes, but also out of a sense of justice, and out of a sense of enlightened self-interest.

There is hope in this crisis: it lies in this community's history of resourcefulness in solving problems. We can respond. We must respond. We cannot delay. We must commit the required resources. We must do it now. We call upon our community to rise to this new challenge. **WE CALL THIS COMMUNITY TO ACTION.**

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THE PROBLEM

Picture, if you will, 100 children entering a Rochester public school this year. Almost half of them are below the national norms in language development and number recognition, the basic school-readiness skills. But still, all are excited and filled with anticipation about this new experience.

What does the future hold for this group of pupils?

For one thing, the group will quickly break apart. Only half of them will return to the second grade in the same school. Although 75 of them will remain in city schools until ninth grade, many of them will have changed schools, teachers and friends several times by then.

Nine of the children will be assigned to special education classes, probably early in their school careers. But many of the remaining 91 (new arrivals will about balance the departures) will do well in elementary school. By the sixth grade many of them will be soaring far above national norms in reading and arithmetic skills, although 18 of them still will need special help.

Beyond that, the picture dims.

In the seventh grade, their interest in school will begin to flag. Twenty of them will miss school at least once a week during seventh, eighth and ninth grades; 11 of those 20 will miss every third day of school and six of those 11 will miss every other day of school.

Not surprisingly, their academic achievement will drop; the number of pupils above national norms will take a nose-dive and the number needing remediation will climb. Still, all will stay on the school rolls and enroll in high school.

At that point, the group will rapidly dwindle. Twenty-three will leave school during the next four years, most of them in the next two years.

Of the remnant, perhaps 33 will be in Regents-level courses at any one time, with good success. But many of those in non-Regents courses will soon begin to experience failure. Probably more than 20 will fail at least one course every semester.

At commencement time 12 years from now, where will our 100 children, or those who have replaced the original members of the group, be?

Thirty of them will have vanished from school district records, including the 23 sure drop-outs.

Fourteen who made it to high school will have left the district, perhaps to graduate elsewhere. Nine will remain in school, still trying to get their diplomas.

Eighteen or 19 of the girls will have had at least one pregnancy; 11 or 12 will have babies by then.

And 38 will be at the commencement to receive diplomas, nine of them Regents diplomas.

To face what future?

Nine will enter four-year colleges. Nine others will enter a community college or seek further training of some kind to prepare themselves for the technical and office work with which Rochester abounds. Twelve will have or expect to get jobs. Four will enter military service. Four will say their plans are uncertain.

These numbers are statistically informed guesses. Among the statistics we find these arresting facts:

- 22 percent of students in grades 7-9 miss school an average of once a week; 12 percent every third day; 6.2 percent every other day.
- For every two students who graduate from a Rochester high school, one drops out.
- Only 37 percent of high school students, only 24 percent of minority students, are in Regents courses. Only 24 percent of graduates receive Regents diplomas.
- Between one-third and one-half of the students who try out for varsity sports are disqualified for failure to maintain C averages.
- Among 1,200 graduates in 1984, only 39 black students had maintained at least a B average.
- Suspensions for unacceptable behavior number more than 8,000 a year; they include more than 500 long-term suspensions of high school students and more than 100 suspensions of elementary school students.
- Twenty-five percent of Rochester's adult population between the ages of 25 and 44 do not have high school diplomas.
- The family incomes of about 40 percent of Rochester students will, at some time during the school years of those children, be below the poverty line. About 60 percent of Rochester students will, at some time during their school years, be members of one-parent families.
- Among Rochesterians 19 years old, 22 percent do not have high school diplomas; at least 20 percent are unemployed or not in the labor force.

These facts represent a sad loss of human potential and an appalling waste of community resources. But they are facts that can be changed. If the community has the will, it can find the way. This report points the way.

THE TASK FORCE

In January of 1985 the Urban League of Rochester convened a small group to consider how it might celebrate its 20th anniversary. From these discussions grew the Community-Wide Initiative to Improve Rochester's Public Schools. A host of community representatives was assembled to plan the initiative. Information was collected through speak-outs for parents, students and teachers. The dimensions and implications of the problems of public education in Rochester were presented to business and community leaders at a June, 1985, workshop at the University of Rochester. Following the U of R Conference two task forces were formed to suggest courses of action.

One task force, co-sponsored by the Industrial Management Council and the Chamber of Commerce, investigated appropriate actions that the business community might take to assist public education. (Members of the task force were: James C. Sutton, Eastman Kodak Co.; Robert Keller, Xerox Corp.; Guilbert C. Hentschke, University of Rochester; Allen Johnson, Wegman's Food Markets, Inc.; Theodor Rosza, Bausch & Lomb, Inc. A summary of the recommendations of the Business Task Force is included in this report (APPENDIX). These recommendations should be viewed as part of the total community effort.

The second task force, co-sponsored by the Center for Educational Development and the Urban League of Rochester, began its work in September. It gathered information, conducted countless interviews and a survey of parents, students and teachers. This is its report to the wider community.

CED/Urban League Task Force

Chairperson Eugene C. Bay, senior pastor, Third Presbyterian Church
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Archie Curry, manager of youth services and community planning and development, Urban League; Rochester Board of Education

Shirley Dorsey, teacher, Charlotte High School

Thomas Frey, member, New York State Board of Regents

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Read Kingsbury, editorial page editor, The Times-Union

Katharine Logan, The Links, retired City School District principal

Dotty Luebke, director of community relations, Eastman Kodak Co.

John McCray, vice president, State University of N.Y. at Brockport

Deborah Mullen, pastor, Trinity Emmanuel Presbyterian Church

Patricia O'Brien, School No. 42 PTA president

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Ronald Sampson, representing Greek letter organizations

Willis Sprattling, Xerox Corp., former chairperson, EPIC

Patricia Stevens, Monroe Community College, Genesee Settlement House board

Joyce Strazzabosco, executive director, Catholic Youth Organization

Adam Urbanski, president, Rochester Teachers' Association

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William A. Johnson, Jr., president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Rochester, Inc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

While we have arranged our recommendations by interest groups for easiest use by the community, several themes run through them:

- The need to involve parents more fully in their children's education, and to improve communications between home and school.
- The need to involve pupils more fully in their own education.
- The need to involve every segment of the community in the education of its children.
- The need to encourage the professionalization of teaching.
- The need to emphasize academic rigor.
- The need for pre-kindergarten education.

Our quest for greater achievement in the public schools of Rochester starts with government - city, county and state - for while we stress many things that can be done without additional cost, not all our recommendations are cost-free. For example, we consider smaller class sizes very important, and movement in that direction will cost money.

More than that, to govern is to choose among public priorities. There can be no higher priority than the proper education of our young.

But the large share of our recommendations are necessarily directed to the city school district. We do not mean to suggest that the shortcomings of the educating effort should be laid at that door more than any other door, but the public school system is, after all, the expression of the public's responsibility for its children. Whatever the community may do to enhance education in other ways, it is through the schools that it will most effectively create change.

Beyond that, we hope to engage the entire community in this initiative. We hope to hear the question, "What can our organization do to help educate Rochester's children?" "What can I do?" We hope the following pages will suggest answers to these questions for each organization, each individual.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pupils, parents, teachers, administrators and school personnel are all partners in the enterprise of education. The following addresses each partner in turn, pointing out goals and actions that together will raise the level of achievement in Rochester public schools.

Toward greater parent participation

Many parents say they do not know what is expected of their children at different ages and grade levels. They say they seldom hear from the school until after there is a problem, or after their child has been absent from school for several days. Some say they feel intimidated and put off by school personnel. The growing number of two-worker families, single-parent families and school-age parents means that the school district must devise new ways to maintain the school-home link. Some of the ways are:

¶ Maintain better contact with homes.
- Encourage teachers to visit the homes of their pupils.
- Help parents carry on a dialogue with the school by giving them one dialogue partner -- the homeroom teacher.
- Train personnel in good community relations.

¶ Help parents monitor academic progress.
- Direct teachers to inform parents in writing what their children are expected to accomplish, what they are accomplishing and how they may help.
- Notify parents at the first sign a student is falling behind in his or her work.
- Require parents of students with failing grades to personally pick up their child's report card.
- Require at least one parent-teacher conference each year before a student will be promoted.
- Design standardized test score reports that are easily read and understood by parents

¶ Discourage truancy.
- Notify parents the first day a student is absent, and when he or she is selectively skipping classes.
- Support the establishment of a truancy court that will hold parents accountable for student attendance.

Toward greater teacher professionalism.

Teacher morale is critical to quality education. To raise and maintain morale, teachers must be encouraged to use their abilities to the fullest. The district must find ways to reward their work without removing them from the classroom into administration careers. For these purposes, the district should:

- Establish career advancement paths within the classroom.

- Establish programs for teachers and administrators to review the work of their peers, and assist those needing help.

- Establish internship programs to help new teachers and administrators review the work of their peers, and assist those needing help.

- Seek more opportunities for summer teacher internships in the private sector.

- Organize a plan, with deadlines, for shifting non-teaching duties from teachers and accomplishing these tasks in other ways.

- Provide time for teacher interaction in faculty meetings, and in teacher-teacher conferences.

- Publish a local academic and professional journal.

Toward greater pupil participation.

Too many students see schools as uncaring and unfriendly. The consequences are a lack of responsibility, self-respect, motivation and school spirit among students. The school district should encourage students to be involved in their own education in a number of ways:

¶ By sharing power.
- Identify school projects that can be managed by students.
- Ask students to help define acceptable standards of student behavior, and enforce the standards (see the Urban League Task Force report on safety and discipline for recommendations). As an enforcement tool, establish a city-wide student court as part of student government.
- Seek student input and assistance in dealing with such problems as vandalism and litter.

¶ By broadening opportunities.
- Encourage students and classes to provide community services through internships in agencies, nursing homes, etc.
- Establish, with student guidance, a program for secondary students to serve as role models, tutors and peer counselors for other students. Give extra credit to student tutors.
- Help students publish newspapers in each high school; initiate contact between student and professional journalists.
- Encourage stronger extracurricular activity programs in every high school.
- Form all-city sports teams; all-city dance, theater and music groups, an all-city student newspaper.
- Start a "dollars for scholars" program to offer tangible rewards for achievement, such as after-school and summer jobs.

Toward greater cultural understanding

Many people perceive a lack of cultural understanding and interaction between school district personnel and the district's multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural student population. To bridge these gaps, the school district should:

- Have a staff development plan that includes a mandatory section on learning about the races and cultures of Rochester.

- Expect teachers, as one criterion in the evaluation of their performance, to be involved in the community outside the school.
- Expect and make it possible for teachers to visit the homes of their students.
- Seek tutors for students from among the many ethnic and racial organizations of the community.

Toward greater academic rigor.

To succeed in a fast-paced, technological society, students must have a strong academic background from which to acquire critical skills. Mediocre performance in school is not acceptable; Regents-level expectations should be the norm. The school district should let students know that more is expected by taking the following steps:

- Set the goal of making the Regents course the required course of study for students not in special education programs; advance toward that goal in measured advances over a period of several years.
- Formalize what is expected of students (see **Toward greater parent participation** above).
- Develop an elementary curriculum segment to enhance critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, cultural understanding, the consideration of values, behavior skills.
- Emphasize language development in grades K-3.
- Discontinue social promotions.
- Reinstate summer school; make it mandatory for students who have failed a course, optional as space is available for students who wish to move ahead.
- Institute a voluntary summer school for elementary school pupils who have been recommended to repeat a grade.

Toward a better teaching and learning environment.

Large classes, the levels of absenteeism, disruption and academic achievement in secondary schools, all bespeak a need for change and a better school atmosphere. Corrective school district actions should include:

- Reduce class sizes. Rochester's classes are comparatively large; its average elementary class, for example, is seven larger than the average Pittsford elementary class, five larger than the average Pittsburgh, Pa., elementary class. Large classes preclude individual attention and counseling, and early intervention in pupils' problems.

- Pursue the secondary school redesign effort; provide models in group decision-making, better teamwork, a professionally enriched atmosphere, clean, attractive settings.

- Expand programs in student alcohol and chemical abuse.

- Continue to work with the Center for Educational Development and all community organizations to increase partnerships and volunteer efforts in the schools.

- Put student achievements before the public by developing skills in presenting information for broadcast or publication.

Toward better service to students.

City students have a host of problems that inhibit academic achievement. The school district cannot meet all needs, but it can help students receive assistance outside the schools in the following ways:

- Give information about what outside help is available to principals and teachers; encourage them to identify students in need of such help and to refer them for it.

- Identify the student needs that volunteers of service organizations can provide, and work with the Center for Educational Development and the Volunteer Resource Division of United Way to find such volunteers. Examples: role models, career advice, big brother/sister relationships.

- Encourage teachers to use the cultural resources of the community regularly; help cultural organizations promote their free performances and services; schedule in-service training in the arts; use the Aesthetic Education Institute for teacher training in the arts.

- Formalize a network of tutoring opportunities through such organizations as Urban League, churches, Community Partners for Youth, Rochester Teacher Association's Dial-a-Teacher, students of district schools, and others. Offer training for tutors. Encourage teachers to refer pupils for tutoring.

- Promote and coordinate awards and scholarships from community organizations.

- Work with the city's Department of Recreation and Community Services to more fully utilize the services available to schools and students.

Toward better transportation services

Transportation is provided to all primary and secondary school children who live more than 1½ miles from their schools. The system, managed by the transportation department of the RCSD, is 90% reimbursed by the State Education Department. But state laws, policies and regulations inhibit the use of the transportation system to help enhance the education of students. For example, reimbursement is received for very limited uses. Another example: pupils must be delivered to within three blocks of where they are picked up, even though the family may wish them to be delivered to a child care provider at some distance.

¶ The school board and city and county administrations should continue to lobby for changes that would:
- Permit reimbursement for transportation to all educational extracurricular activities.
- Permit the use of school buses to transport parents to appropriate school activities.
- Allow pupils to be picked up and dropped off to accommodate before- and after-school programs arranged by parents.

¶ All other organizations interested in city public education should lobby or otherwise advocate for these changes.

Toward greater school district participation in the community.

The community's social and cultural organizations shape and coordinate their programs when they come together under the aegis of several major planning and funding agencies: The Monroe County Department of Social Services, the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Board, United Way, the city's Office of Human Services Planning, the Private Industry Council, Arts for Greater Rochester, the Rochester Area Youth Development Council and others. The City School District is both a major provider and consumer of such services, yet it is not represented in these forums at a high and consistent level. The superintendent should:

. Work with these agencies, and name delegates - for example, principals, vice principals, deans - to represent him or her in these forums and report directly to him on their deliberations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

IN PARENTING AND SCHOOL-READINESS PROGRAMS

Too many Rochester children enter school without the language and number skills necessary for learning. The solution lies partly in helping parents prepare them, partly in providing pre-kindergarten programs for some of them. A long-term study in Ypsilanti, Michigan, determined that $1 spent on high quality pre-schooling returned $7 in later savings on remedial education, welfare and law enforcement effort and increased lifetime earnings.

Parenting programs.

¶ The city school district should:

- Expand the parenting education component in the school nurseries being developed for school-age mothers; require mothers in the nursery program to take part in the parenting education component.

- Expand the Effective Parenting Information for Children Program (EPIC) from its present school-based curriculum to a community-based curriculum and from K-6 to all grade levels. Include workshops in housing projects and community centers.

¶ Community institutions should increase the number of parenting education programs being offered.

Pre-kindergarten programs.

¶ The city school district should:

- Expand the existing pre-kindergarten programs in schools.

- Promote cooperation between elementary schools and the pre-kindergarten programs and parents in their areas, with the goal of preparing the children for school.

- Tell parents through the public media how they can help prepare their children for school.

- Institute a program like the former Community Teacher Program, in which paraprofessionals conduct school readiness activities in homes.

¶ The school district, the Center for Educational Development and representatives of community pre-kindergarten classes should coordinate applications for public and private funds. (The Center for Educational Development should assume responsibility for initiating and coordinating this effort).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARENTS

Parents are the child's first teachers; they are responsible for the successful growth of the child. This makes them the lead partners in the enterprise of education, responsible for doing everything they can to enhance the process. Parents should:

- ¶ See that the child has proper rest and nutrition.
- ¶ Expect the child to achieve in school. Talk to him or her about schoolwork; monitor the homework.
- ¶ Attend school conferences; make arrangements with employer if this must be done during work hours.
- ¶ Participate in the life of the school.
- ¶ Ask the school for information about the progress of their child; require clarity and candor.
- ¶ If confused or intimidated, ask others -- ministers, social agency workers, etc. -- for help.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STUDENTS

The student is not just the passive, receiving partner in education; he or she must be the most active partner. The student must be in school, taking responsibility for getting the best of the education that is offered. We have the following recommendations for students:

- ¶ Take control of your education; your parents are paying for it; you have a right to it. Ask for help of teachers after school, of tutors, of parents.
- ¶ Talk about school with your parents.
- ¶ Don't take the easy courses; get the needed preparation for work or further schooling.
- ¶ As you respect your own rights, respect the rights of others who wish to learn.
- ¶ Participate in the life of the school; the activities all have important educational value.
- ¶ Take your share of responsibility for the functioning of the school.
- ¶ Help other students by tutoring, or sharing your abilities and interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TEACHERS

As a professional partner of the education team, the teacher must feel a deep sense of engagement in the work, a commitment to the interests of the client and the effectiveness of the entire enterprise. To achieve these goals, we offer the following recommendations:

¶ Toward greater professionalization, teachers should:

- Be willing to help new colleagues, and colleagues with problems, become more effective teachers.
- Be willing to help colleagues who lack competence.
- Avail themselves of opportunities for professional growth (including summer internships in the private sector).
- Be involved in the school community and in the wider community, not least for the opportunities to establish cross-cultural relationships.

¶ To more effectively assist their students, teachers should:

- Raise their sights about what they expect of their students.
- Assign homework regularly, and see that it is done.
- Expand their efforts to give individual help and tutoring.
- Know about sources of outside tutoring and other assistance for their pupils, and be willing to refer them for such assistance.

¶ For more effective relationships with parents, teachers should:

- Be willing to make home visits.
- Send positive reinforcement of a pupil's work to parents, not only negative reinforcement.
- Notify parents as soon as a pupil is observed to be falling behind the pace of classroom work and expectations

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The enthusiastic commitment of the business community is essential if the problems of the schools are to be solved. Our recommendations to the business community are to:

¶ Implement the recommendations of the Chamber of Commerce/Industrial Management Council Task Force Report to:

- Provide **job placement opportunities** as incentives for student performance.
- Join in **partnerships between individual businesses and schools** at every school building in the district.
- Help **market education,** in order to raise community awareness and participation in schooling.
- Provide opportunities to teachers and staff to help **enhance teaching and school management skills.**
- Serve as a **consulting resource,** providing the city school district with access to business expertise and knowledge in such areas as budgeting, planning, and systems design.

¶ In addition, area businesses should encourage employee-parent involvement in their children's education by allowing them to take the time they need for school conferences without penalty.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

The Rochester community finds many ways to help children take advantage of their educational opportunities -- ways as diverse as the lessons of discipline and team effort learned on the Little League diamond, and the lessons of parenting learned in church programs for teenage mothers. In all this, a compassionate and creative impulse is evident. So is the need to tap that impulse more fruitfully. We have three general recommendations, followed by a series of recommendations to organizations in specific fields in the community.

¶ Education as a focus of all organizations

The governing body of each human service, cultural, educational and service organization should examine what it can do to enhance public education in Rochester, and work cooperatively to do so. It should see to it that all its programs support, and in no way inhibit, the educational effort.

¶ Reinforcement by funding sources

Each funding source that supports human services programs -- United Way, foundations, the County and State Departments of Social Services, the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau, the State Division for Youth, the City's Office of Human Services Planning and other government bodies -- should establish as a priority in all its programs the enhancement of public education in Rochester. Each source should expect of each organization it funds a statement of intent to support public education and a plan of implementation. It should regularly review these plans and evaluate progress in educational participation.

¶ Volunteer support for education

The Rochester School District, the Center for Educational Development and the Volunteer Resource Division of the United Way should develop a plan to match the needs of schools and pupils for outside help with the volunteers who can provide that help. They should focus particularly on service organizations -- service clubs, fraternal organizations, veterans' organizations, special interest clubs of every description. They should not only solicit the help of individuals, but should challenge each organization to undertake projects in the schools.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES

Personal and family problems impede a student's academic achievement. Rochester is rich with human service agencies which address individual and family needs. Every agency, whether it directly serves youth or not, has the capability to do something explicitly and specifically supporting educational achievement. While many already use methods and offer programs that complement or supplement educational efforts, more is needed.

¶ Agency personnel should be knowledgeable about public school achievement issues and concerns. Board and staff meetings should include discussion of such issues.

¶ Agency boards should develop a policy statement and an implementation plan directed at improving educational achievement as a priority in delivering services to youth and families.

¶ Each agency should examine its programs and operating procedures with an eye toward fostering educational achievement wherever possible. They can, among other things:

- Promote regular school attendance and attainment of at least a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- Inform parents and school personnel of a student's progress within the agency's program as appropriate.
- Encourage students to develop goals and to explore choices for their future.
- Add academic achievement to their program requirements and inquire about school performance.
- Advocate for strong truancy laws.

¶ Each agency should more clearly promote, to the appropriate personnel of both schools and other agencies, the many supportive services they offer. Some of the ways this should be done are by:

- Promoting services at faculty meetings and as part of in-service training.
- Conducting joint staff meetings among agencies to discuss services.
- Describing the benefits of their services more specifically to potential consumers, both youth and parents.
- Incorporating information on other agency programs into staff orientation and training.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Art is not a frill. It is essential in educating children to live in our technological society and to understanding the world around them; it enhances their self-esteem and personal development. Fortunately, Rochester has many cultural institutions: museums, galleries, orchestras, theater companies, dance groups and performing artists. These institutions can help overcome barriers of race and culture that divide our community.

Many of the more affluent school districts take full advantage of these resources. Unfortunately, the city school district cannot. As a consequence, its students are shortchanged, and the use of cultural facilities in our community has become socially stratified.

To their credit, the cultural organizations are not satisfied with this state of affairs. They recognize their responsibility to enrich the lives of city school district students both in the schools and in their own facilities. They will respond to a call for collaborative action.

¶ Appropriate cultural organizations should meet together to establish a collaborative educational plan for city school district students.

- Arts for Greater Rochester should convene the meeting, in cooperation with the Center for Educational Development and the Urban League.
- The city school district should name as its official representative the director of Project Unique and Artists in Residence programs.

¶ This consortium of cultural institutions should:

- With the city school district and the Urban League, submit a joint proposal to the Arts in Education Initiative of the New York State Council on the Arts.
- Consider a joint application to the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, which has a special interest in strengthening the role of art education for children.

¶ Each participating organization should prepare a list of services that are directly related to improving the quality of public education in Rochester, and plans for enhancing those educational services.

- Prepare a special directory of cultural education services for city school district students and teachers that can be distributed to all city schools.
- Establish a system for reporting progress in implementing the education plans of the separate organizations.

¶ Among other activities, this consortium should:

- Address the lack of transportation, which is a key factor in the city school district's failure to take advantage of the city's cultural facilities.
- Arrange for maps of bus routes to cultural institutions (possibly a business would consider printing them, using them as placemats and distributing them).
- Establish teams of volunteers from community groups who would introduce city school district children to the cultural resources of the community.

¶ Each cultural organization for its own purposes should:

- Develop a mission statement and plan designed for use in the cultural education of city school district children to break down racial barriers and social stratification in the use of its facilities.
- Review the composition of its board of directors and staff with a view toward increasing minority representation.
- Use local minority artists more in its programs.
- Promote its free performances and other events more vigorously in the city schools.
- Offer tickets to events as prizes in school competition.
- Give young people the opportunity to earn tickets to cultural events by doing volunteer work for cultural organizations.
- Work with schools to establish programs in which students receive credit for participating in cultural activities (not just classes).
- Find ways to draw teachers into its program.
- Emulate Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra's project for inner city pre-school children in which children become acquainted with music and instruments.
- Work with the city school district to spread tour bookings more evenly throughout the school year.
- Coordinate hours of cultural institutions with hours of the school day to make sure they are accessible to children.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Rochester has a myriad of organizations made up of people drawn together by common interest, experiences, philosophies, ethnic heritage or other reasons. Many of them support the city school district in various ways: awards for student scholarship and citizenship; providing special instruction and role models for students; undertaking special or continuing projects in schools. Many would do more if it were simpler to do so.

- Each organization -- service, labor union, veterans', fraternal, social and other -- should adopt a five-year education participation plan and review it annually. These plans could support the work of individual members with students; create projects of special interest to the group; undertake projects recommended by the Volunteer Resource Division of the United Way, Center for Educational Development, or city school district. It is imperative that organizations with similar programs and activities meet to discuss their various methods to extend their programs to needy neighborhoods or areas not previously considered by the group.

- The Volunteer Resource Division of the United Way should take inventory of the community's organizations to determine what is being done to support public education, and what could be done. The Center for Educational Development should challenge every group to develop or undertake projects needed by the schools.

- Organizations that interact with students (clubs, teams, tutoring, etc.) should meet to discuss student expectations, adult expectations, role-modeling responsibilities and related topics in order to set a city-wide standard for role-model behavior in the organizations' programs.

- Labor unions should set up apprenticeship programs for students as appropriate..

- Each organization should have a list of members willing to volunteer as role models for students. They should be matched with students according to the plan developed by the Volunteer Resource Division of the United Way, Center for Educational Development and the school district.

- Organizations with awards and scholarship programs should be called together to discuss the standards of these programs and how to extend and enrich them.

- Organizations should increase drug and alcohol intervention programs.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Religious institutions can play a large role in the education of the city's children. They can strengthen the family life that is important as a foundation for learning, and strengthen the role of parents in their children's education. And they can deal directly with children, encouraging them in many ways. Congregations can provide services and volunteers for these efforts. But it is beyond the reach of many congregations to take the initiative in these matters; furthermore, the work of the churches and synagogues in education needs to be coordinated and given a common and unified impetus. We recommend the following:

¶ The Center for Educational Development/Urban League Task Force should convene a meeting of representatives of religious institutions (both congregations and denominations) to frame a plan by which churches and synagogues in the city and suburbs can help in the education of city children. The Center for Educational Development/Urban League Task Force should ask churches, denominations and foundations to fund a position to coordinate this effort, and ask Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, the Jewish Community Federation or both, to provide space and support services for this coordinator.

¶ This coordinator should identify the needs of schools and students that churches and synagogues could serve. He/she would discuss these needs with congregations and religious associations, and help channel their services to those who would benefit by them.

¶ Strong congregations, or clusters of congregations, could adopt the children of a school, or a neighborhood, and assure that they have the necessities and enriching experiences necessary for good education.

¶ Each church and synagogue should have a plan to enhance the education of its own children, as well as others in the community.

Here are some additional things that religious institutions can do:

- Be aware of the problems in public education and of racism, and of their effects on community life. Preach and teach on these matters.
- Express a commitment to education in what is preached and taught.
- Emphasize the value of academic achievement in work with youth.
- Urge parents to attend school conferences, visit schools, call the teachers of their children. Provide training to make them comfortable in doing that. Provide volunteers to accompany parents to school conferences, or substitute for parents when necessary.
- Help children explore vocational choices, using congregation members as role models.
- Recruit congregation members to tutor children and serve as class aides in schools.
- Offer nursery and pre-school programs with good educational content.
- Offer after-school and latch-key programs.
- Offer programs to target groups, such as pregnant teenagers and teen parents.
- Provide activities, such as scouting, as an alternative to hanging out on street corners.
- Offer space for tutoring and for evening study.
- Offer use of church buses for class field trips.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Colleges and universities in the community play a major role in the educational life of the community. They educate its teachers and school administrators, but they can do much more. They should:

- Work with the City School District to:
  - Provide student interns from a variety of majors, to serve as classroom assistants.
  - Provide more and larger summer campus programs, as well as weekend academies.
  - Offer career development training programs for disadvantaged youth and high school drop-outs (the Science and Technology Entry Program serves as an example).
  - Provide training and development programs for staff/teachers in human interactive skills.
- Encourage faculty and staff to become involved in the life of city schools as individual volunteers.
- Cooperate with the City School District in curriculum development, so that students are better prepared for what is expected of them in college.
- Recruit high school students more intensly from city schools, and offer scholarship programs for some of the students.
- Offer staff development workshops for City School District teachers and administrators to help enhance their teaching abilities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR LIBRARIES

Public libraries can complement the work of the schools in a number of ways. They can visit classes with books; hold story hours in schools and in libraries; invite classes to the library; provide reading lists; make sure that books on teachers' reading lists are available; have summer reading clubs; provide an opportunity for volunteer service by teenagers and youth organizations or for other youth activities. In some cities, they provide homework hotlines, and have literacy programs in less formal settings than classrooms. School and public librarians can and should work together in the selection of books for their respective libraries.

Some of these activities take place in Rochester but many do not. The relationships between the schools and their nearby branch libraries appear to be inconsistent, and there appears to be little cooperative relationship at the highest levels. So the work falls far short of the potential. The Board of Education and the Rochester Public Library Board of Directors should:

- Adopt policies and direct the preparation of plans for library resources to be put to the service of education to the fullest extent possible.

- Assign the responsibility for developing these plans to administrators of high rank, and monitor the progress regularly. The school board may need to restore the position of district library supervisor to full-time status.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR

THE DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

In recreation, children find many values that enhance their school performance: self-expression, the discipline of individual and team effort, the lessons of success and failure, self-esteem.

The City's Department of Recreation and Community Services has a broad charge to provide cultural, athletic and social programs. It has a budget of $2.8 million, with 36 full-time and some 30 part-time employees. It provides a variety of athletic, arts and crafts programs for children and youth at 22 sites, 12 of them in schools.

However, the relationship between schools and recreation departments is that of landlord-tenant. The schools do not see the recreation department as an opportunity to enhance their work.

In addition, service organizations and volunteers operate leagues in various sports for children and youth of both sexes, but only in some parts of the city. The opportunity for such recreation is by no means as universal as it is in most of the city's suburbs.

¶ The Board of Education and City Council should adopt policies and direct the preparation of plans so the resources of the Department of Recreation and Community Services can be put to the service of education to the fullest extent possible. They should assign high-level administrators for these responsibilities, and monitor progress regularly. Their joint plan should:

. Coordinate intramural sports programs for schools.

. Provide after-school activities in sports, music and art to supplement what the school provides, or substitute for what it cannot provide.

. Survey the need for additional sports leagues throughout the city. The Volunteer Resource Division of the United Way should seek out organizations -- veterans clubs, for example - to sponsor these additional leagues, and volunteers to direct them.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR THE MEDIA

What local publications print and what local radio and television stations air about the city schools and their pupils constitute the entire body of knowledge that most residents have about them. The media provides information about school policy issues, and sometimes about the achievements of the schools and pupils. But largely, they get their information about the activities of youth from school coaches and police reports. Naturally, the result is a warped picture of schools and youth.

- ¶ News and information media organizations should develop plans to raise the achievements of students in arts, academic and other areas to the same level of prominence as achievement in athletics.

- ¶ They should develop additional sources of information about school and student news, and use them regularly.

- ¶ Editors and reporters should meet regularly with students, and use students as reporters. In particular, there should be regular contact with staffs of school publications.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Summary of Concerns

The growing interest of citizens and community groups in helping the schools should be taken advantage of to the fullest extent. There is a concern, however, that the city school district be aided in learning how to take advantage of this help, rather than being overwhelmed by it.

Community groups which are seeking to help the schools should consult and cooperate; these groups and the city school district must have coordinated interaction.

Implementation Recommendations

- The Center for Educational Development (CED) should be the coordinator of assistance (especially for partnerships, volunteers and contributions) to the city school district. For this to happen, the community must provide CED with financial support adequate to pay for the staff that will be required.

- The Industrial Management Council and Chamber of Commerce are expected to provide a staff person who will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the involvement of the business community. This will be especially important in the provision of consultative services to the city school district and job opportunities to students, but also in coordinating the efforts of the business community with those of other groups.

- Other groups (e.g. religious institutions, human service providers, cultural institutions) will need to designate their own coordinators. In some cases, such a person may be made available by shifting present staff responsibilities. In others, funds for such a position may have to be found. (If religious institutions are to be involved in a serious way, for example, churches and synagogues may have to go together to fund an education coordinator position, or locate foundation funds for this purpose.)

- The various community groups that are concerned and supportive of public education in Rochester need a mechanism for communication and coordination of their efforts, and a place where they can interface with the city school district. This is necessary to minimize conflict in purposes and programs, to enhance the district's ability to manage the process, to monitor implementation of the Community Task Force's recommendations, and to keep the momentum going forward.

  We recommend, therefore, the creation of a Community Roundtable on Rochester Schools, to be staffed by the Center for Educational Development. All groups which have major roles in assisting the educational process should have a seat at the Roundtable, including specifically: The City School District, business, higher education, religious institutions, cultural institutions, human service agencies, service organizations, the school-based committees, the City of Rochester.

  In addition to its coordinating and communication functions, this group should take responsibility for keeping the concern of public education before our community, and it should be an advocate for the city schools before city, county, state and federal governments.

  The Center for Educational Development and the city school district together should take responsibility for forming the Roundtable.

APPENDIX

Chamber of Commerce/Industrial Management Council's Business/Education Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

How can the Rochester community help students in our city's public schools receive a better education and become more productive, responsible citizens? This question was raised and explored throughout the community in 1985. The Industrial Management Council of Rochester, N.Y., Inc. (IMC) and the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (C of C) view this as a major question that must be addressed if we are to ensure the continued excellent quality of life in Rochester.

The Urban League of Rochester has played a key role in encouraging community members to be aware of difficulties in our public schools and join in efforts to address them. High failure, suspension, truancy, and drop-out rates, low student motivation and achievement, and lack of skills needed for employment are some of the primary concerns. It is clear that the schools cannot address these alone. The roots of these problems lie in many aspects of our students' experiences. Thus, total community involvement is needed to successfully overcome these problems.

To determine how business resources can best participate in this effort the C of C and IMC formed a Business/Education Task Force in September of 1985.

Its mission: to provide leadership through the community in:

1. identifying opportunities for business assistance to Rochester's public schools, and
2. designing and helping to implement applicable programs, while sharing the community's goal of assisting Rochester's students in becoming productive, responsible citizens.

Task Force members assigned by their companies to work on this project until January of 1986, are: Guilbert Hentschke (University of Rochester), Allen Johnson (Wegman's Food Markets, Inc.), Robert Keller (Xerox Corporation), Theodor Rosza (Bausch & Lomb, Inc.), and James Sutton (Eastman Kodak Company). Jane Dallinger (Center for Educational Development) provided staff support.

II. DISCUSSION

We are not alone in our concern about the declining quality of urban education; this concern exists throughout the United States. The Center for Economic Development conducted a nationwide study and published its findings regarding ways business and others can help in INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN. The Reagan administration also speaks to the issue in A NATION AT RISK. Both documents accentuate the need for local, decentralized efforts

and total community involvement to address the problem. The impact of approaches with these characteristics was confirmed in visits by the Task Force to Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, and Boston.

Business has made a major commitment to the schools in these four cities, as well as in other cities, for two primary reasons:

1. Economic Necessity:
   -- A well-educated work force is needed to create greater productivity and enhance decision-making.
   -- $30 billion is spent by business annually for remedial training.

2. High Cost of Failure:
   -- Rising unemployment expands welfare, decreases personal income and the tax base.
   -- This leads to rising crime rates, a lower standard of living, and social instability.
   -- Costs to business will include higher taxes for more welfare, jails, and police; loss of international competitiveness, and a shrinking market.

It is clear that business involvement in education is a long-term investment in the welfare of our community and our nation as well as our children.

Given this background, the Task Force conducted an intensive study that included visits to many of Rochester's city schools, and trips to the aforementioned cities, where strong school/business linkages are already successfully addressing needs similar to those in Rochester. Interviews were conducted here and elsewhere with teachers, administrators, parents, students, public officials, clergy, business representatives, college and university representatives, and many others. The visits, interviews, and various readings provided the raw material used by the Task Force to identify primary needs and effective ways of meeting them.

In addition, an Advisory Committee of IMC/C of C representatives met regularly with the Task Force to review and refine material. Members of the Advisory Committee are: Wyoma Best, John Hostutler, Dorothy Luebke, Constance Mitchell, Thomas Mooney, Sandra Parker, and Willis Sprattling.

The Task Force used a four-phase process to complete its mission. Data gathering (I) led to the identification of major problem areas (II). Recommended programs and implementation plans were developed (III). A final report and a presentation were completed (IV). The Advisory Committee and other key people were consulted for refinement of ideas and consensus on planning at all phases of the process.

During its fact-finding phase, the Task Force discovered that changes throughout society are having a major impact on urban schools. In Rochester and other cities across the United States, high poverty levels, an increase in single-parent families, the large number of families on public assistance, increases in teen pregnancy, and taxpayer demographics affecting public funding for city schools combine to strain the capabilities of the schools. In addition to providing academic education, schools must offer nutrition programs, surrogate parenting, day care, immunization, counseling, and more.

The Task Force also found that in spite of these difficulties many dedicated teachers, administrators, parents, and community members are deeply committed to educating children well.

Business and other segments of the community are already helping the schools in a variety of ways, including the Program for Rochester to Interest Students in Science and Math (PRISM), the Rochester Area Career Education Council (RACEC), the Center for Educational Development (CED), and the Private Industry Council (PIC). Enhanced coordination of these and other currently operating mechanisms would be beneficial. However, many more collaborations are also needed and our community has the resources to initiate them.

III. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The entire Rochester community must take part in a thoughtful, carefully planned and implemented effort if we are to make major improvements in the education of our children -- no individual segment of the community can accomplish this alone. In Pittsburgh, this type of approach is leading to the improvement of every teacher in the system, has turned the worst high school into the best one, and is having an impact on students throughout the school district. Similar efforts are having a highly significant impact in the other cities studied.

A. AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

During the first phase of its undertaking, the Task Force worked to identify the primary needs in Rochester's schools. After an intensive study, the Task Force delineated the needs as "Areas of Opportunity for the Rochester Community." Our language was chosen to stress the fact that opportunities exist for everyone in the community to provide assistance and help our students improve.

The "Areas of Opportunity" are:

* Reduce High Frequency of Inappropriate Student Behavior -- This includes all areas of behavior -- from truancy, failure to complete assignments, and teen pregnancy and drug use.

* Enhance Student Motivation and Skills Required to Succeed -- Young people without a desire to do well or the skills (communications, basic math, etc.) needed to perform well will not succeed as students or ultimately as citizens and employees.

* Increase Positive Expectations, Role Models, and Human Resources for Students -- In many cases, students have insufficient exposure to productive, caring adults who encourage children to apply themselves and can serve as models of success.

* Provide Essential Enrichment Opportunities for Students -- Activities such as field trips, frequent exposure to music, computers, and art, and other essential experiences are available on a very limited basis to many city school students.

* Offset Deficiencies/Shortcomings in Students' (Physical) Environment -- Occasional shortages of books to take home, some facilities in need of updating and repair, and limited access to computers are among the shortcomings students in some buildings encounter.

* Assist in the Formulation of Public Policies That Are Sensitive to Essential Ingredients Needed for Excellent Education -- Public policies currently shortchange urban school districts financially; they also support weaknesses in curriculum development, review of staff performance, and other areas that inhibit the quality of education.

* Enhance the Effectiveness of the School System's Organizational Structure -- Like most large organizations, the City School District can benefit from studies and action plans designed to help it operate more efficiently and effectively.

* Enhance Development of Teacher Self-Esteem/Motivation/Performance -- Our city school teachers work under increasingly difficult conditions and are being asked to do more with fewer resources. In addition, no effective mechanism exists for the review of performance, rewarding of good teachers, and improvement of teacher performance.

* Enhance Faculty Knowledge, Skills, and Motivation Needed to Prepare Students for Work and/or Higher Education -- Teachers and counselors do not have sufficient time or ongoing training needed to help students become successful employees or college/university students.

* Ensure the Synergistic Impact of the Above Items by Involving the Total Community (Parents, Human Services, Religious Organizations, Higher Education, Cultural Institutions, Etc.) -- The problems in our schools have varied causes related to the school system itself, society as a whole, changes in family life, and more. The Rochester community is rich in resources -- people, places, events, etc. -- that can be used to support our schools. By breaking down the traditional business/community barriers, all people -- starting with parents - can ensure the utilization of these resources to enrich the lives of our children.

B. MAJOR TASKS

Money alone will not address these areas of opportunity. Meaningful participation by people with a wide variety of skills and interests will be an essential ingredient. Five tasks have been identified as the most effective responses business can make to the areas of opportunity. These tasks have been modeled after highly successful programs currently operating in the cities studied or, on a limited basis, in Rochester.

1. Jobs: To provide job placement opportunities as incentives for student performance in the classroom and for exposure to the working environment and career options (career paths).

2. Partnerships: To provide opportunities for broad-scale interaction between employers/employees and students, faculty, and administrators at the school building level.

3. Marketing of Education: To raise the community's awareness about education's key role in developing human potential and about the positive aspects of Rochester's public schools; to encourage participation in schooling by parents and others in the community.

4. Staff Development: To provide opportunities to teachers, counselors, and administrators for enhancement of teaching and management skills, increased sensitivity to cultural differences, subject matter enrichment, and direct exposure to career and higher education options for students in the Rochester community.

5. Consulting Resources: To provide the City School District (CSD) with access to problem-solving capabilities in support of non-instructional systems and services management.

C. MECHANISMS

Pinpointing the areas of need and tasks to begin addressing them is relatively straightforward. Establishing the management processes that ensure achievement of objectives and long-term viability is a more difficult undertaking.

Several mechanisms have been identified as key ingredients in a stable, long-term program to accomplsih the Major Tasks. These mechanisms will ensure continuity of the business commitment and encourage involvement of other segments of the community. They are modeled after successes in other cities and in Rochester. In some cases they use resources already operating here. The mechanisms are:

1. The Rochester Alliance: A cooperative effort to improve the schools undertaken jointly by the school district, business, parents, teachers, higher education, the Center for Educational Development, religious and human service organizations, and others. Similar to the Boston Compact and the Atlanta Partnership.

2. A Business/Education Director: Coordinates business involvement in the schools, reports to Business/Education Forum.

   * Works with the Rochester Alliance -- e.g. ensures that business commitments to the CSD are carried out, interfaces with the overall community on total support for the CSD, provides follow-up on actions coming from the Business/Education Forum, etc.

   * This is an essential ingredient to ensure initial success and ongoing stability of this effort. All four cities visited had an individual who functioned in this role: Boston - Director of the Boston Compact, Atlanta - Executive Director of the Atlanta Partnership, Minneapolis - Assistant to the Superintendent, and Pittsburgh - President of the Allegheny Conference.

3. Fundraising Mechanism: Secures financial support for the business-sponsored mechanisms -- CED, Jobs, Marketing of Education, etc. Reports to Business/Education Director.

* A person to focus on fundraising is essential to ensure stable support for the mechanisms. This person would serve as an expert on both public and private funding for all of the mechanisms, and would enable directors of the individual programs to focus on program operation. Such a process operates highly effectively in Pittsburgh. It appears to be the most efficient use of time and money when several different but related operations need ongoing funding.

4. A Job Component: A Job Director will serve as liaison between the business community and the schools managing the job component. He or she will identify job opportunities for students and supervise a Job Coordinator in each high school. Coordinators will match students with part-time jobs, summer jobs, and internships. Job availability will be tied to school and work performance. The coordinator will work closely with school counselors on focused career advisement.

5. Consulting Resources and Training Opportunities: Business and higher education resources will become more available to the school district. We did not see a carefully defined mechanism for this elsewhere, but it is clear that this is an area where business can provide human resources essential to the smoother operation of the school district.

6. A Public Relations Campaign: Designed to increase community awareness and involvement in the schools.

   * Minneapolis and Memphis have operated highly successful public relations campaigns in recent years that have made a big impact on parent and community involvement in the schools.

7. A Teachers' Center and a Principals' Institute: Designed to provide teachers, counselors, and principals with the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge.

   * The Schenley Teacher Center in Pittsburgh has been so impressive that it is currently being initiated in Boston and is being studied by people throughout the country for implementation elsewhere.

   * The Atlanta Principals' Institute, also operating successfully in other cities, has been proven to be an effective mechanism for training and evaluating line managers.

   * Business would provide indirect support for both the Center and the Institute.

D. PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

The Task Force also discovered one additional area of critical importance in our effort to help Rochester's children. Early childhood development has been proven to exert a major influence on individual performance in later years. Our studies indicate clearly that pre-Kindergarten programs can play a significant role, helping children succeed in school and throughout their adult life. Some city children currently participate in excellent pre-school programs, but many who most need such programs are

not in one. Representatives from the Rochester community can make an invaluable contribution by providing early-learning opportunities for all our young children.

It is also critical that all who might become involved view this effort as an investment in our community's future. Research has shown that if we do not spend time, energy, and material resources to educate our children more adequately now, we will spend a much greater amount of time, energy, and resources on them later, when they become poorly performing or non-functioning adults. Our community as a whole can thrive only if we are willing to make a major investment in the welfare of our children. They are now in the process of becoming our employees, parents, teachers, and community leaders of the future.